

TESTIMONY OF THE MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

House Bill 432 by Representative Brady Wiseman

A bill to provide for liability for GMO Damages

House Agriculture Committee – Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee my name is Don Judge and I'm sorry that I cannot be there today on behalf of the Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club in support of House Bill 432. Unfortunately, I have another hearing which I need to attend.

Mr. Chairman, the Sierra Club's National organization has long held that Genetically Modified Organism's may impact the environment and nature's natural process for growth, development and natural selection in ways that we can't anticipate. We humans can only test, project and anticipate the impacts that GMO research and development will have on our future. But, we can't know, for sure, what the long term impacts of such development will produce.

GMO's may produce hardy crops able to withstand disease, insect infestation, drought or other conditions that Nature's natural crops as less able to survive. And, they may produce crops that are superior in production value. On the other hand, GMO's may appear to have all of these virtues, but in fact may create strains of products which also negatively impact our body's immune systems, or may themselves become uncontrollable and become nothing more than a manmade version of Mother Nature's noxious weeds.

As an analogy, think of flu vaccines and how scientists and health care providers once thought that providing vaccinations would rid us of all flu. Now, the successors of those scientists and health care providers recognize that the flu simply mutates, sometimes becoming more virulent and dangerous and that new vaccines need to be developed to deal with Mother Nature's way of responding to mankind's efforts. It's not that we wouldn't want the flu vaccines to be developed, simply that we need to recognize the consequences of our actions.

The Sierra Club's National Genetic Engineering Committee supports liability legislation as provided in House Bill 432 and believes that it proposes to deal with some of the consequences of the development of GMO's.

It would be difficult at best to prevent the spread of GMO's. It would be similar to trying to prevent the spread of pollution through the winds or weeds through animal or human distribution. But, when the lands of farmers who are not planting genetically engineered crops become contaminated by the spread of genetically engineered crops, the farmers should be compensated. HB 432 intends just that.

Many individuals would prefer naturally grown products, including meats, poultry, vegetables, fruits and grains. A growing number of our citizens don't want to eat genetically modified food products and this is evidenced by the growth of natural food stores, food coops and the like. As such, the farmer who chooses to grow crops which

serve this expanding market is threatened by the potential pollution of his or her products through the spread of GMO's from adjacent lands.

HB 432 simply suggests that the economic vitality of those farmers deserves the same protections that you and I do as consumers of those products. We urge you to give HB 432 a "do pass" recommendation.

Thank you,

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Montana Chapter, Sierra Club

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